

How to Make Costumes for Children's Day



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FOREWORD: To answer the question, "Where or how can I get costumes?" which so disturbs the mind of the amateur play producer and which, perhaps more than any other, interferes with the production of worthy pageants and plays by church groups in particular, is the purpose of this pamphlet.

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How to Make Costumes for Children's Day

By ELISABETH EDLAND

COSTUMING a pageant or play requires more careful thought and less physical energy than is usually conceded it. If color and lines are given attention, laborious sewing and needless expenditures of money are avoided. By knowing how to adapt a few basic patterns, and with a little experimentation with dyes, the amateur can make almost any costume he needs. Costumes need be accurate in detail only so far as to suggest the correct costume to the audience.

Patterns

BIBLICAL COSTUMES

Draperies: An effective biblical costume can be suggested through using draperies. A straight piece of cloth, five to seven yards in length depending upon the height of the player, is draped about the person as follows: Beginning at the front, plait one end of the material several times and fasten with a safety pin at the center waist line. Continue around left, and at center waist line, back, plait several times again and fasten with a pin. Continue around to front and swing material over left shoulder allowing a generous loop to hang down in front. Swing the remainder of the drapery over the right shoulder, allowing another generous loop to fall in back. Fasten this loop together at the nape of the neck with a safety pin so that it will not be seen. The garment should also be fastened in front so as to form a V neck. A long garment must be worn underneath.

A square of cloth can also be draped effectively by fastening one corner to the left shoulder, swing across the back, under the right arm, and fasten again on the left shoulder.



HOW TO MAKE COSTUMES



A SERVANT

BIBLICAL COSTUMES

A RICH MAN



Outer drapery: For the outer drapery, a width of cloth is necessary which measures from elbow to elbow when the arms are outstretched sideways. The length measures from the ankles, back, over the shoulder to half way between the neck and waist-line. A slit is cut for the head to slip through, and it is draped as follows: The left selvage, in back just a few inches below the waist-line, is brought up under the arm and fastened on the shoulder; at the same time gather together the material falling over the chest and bunch in the same fastening. This can be done with safety pins or fasteners. The outer drapery is usually worn over a tunic.

Aba: The aba is the longer outer coat worn frequently by men. Over each of the outstretched arms measure a piece of cloth from the ankles, over the shoulder, and down to the ankles again. Sew this together in the back, and at each side, allowing an opening of about 12 inches for the hands.

Tunic: If knee length, measure a length of material, twice the length from shoulder to knee. For the arms cut two pieces of cloth 12 inches wide and the desired arm length. Sew one, using the 12-inch side, to the exact center of each of the selvage edges of the longer piece. Fold over in half, sew together side and arm seams, and cut an opening for the head to slip through. If a tunic longer than knee length is required, allow the side seams to remain open at the bottom. The tunic is often worn under the aba, with a girdle about the waist, or with the outer drapery, or just by itself.

Turban: Turbans can be made either through winding or sewing. The former requires more material, the latter more sewing. For the wound turban, 4 yards of material, 20 inches wide, is required, although a fairly representative turban



A HERALD



HOW TO MAKE COSTUMES

can be made of a shorter length. The material is caught about the head, the center coming about an inch above the nose, and is tied firmly in the back. The two ends are then twisted loosely, wound about the head, and the ends caught firmly under the cap foundation. If further security is felt necessary, the two ends can be pinned under.

For the sewed turban, use the rounded crown of an old hat for a foundation. Turban foundations can also be purchased in a five and ten store. Cut a one-yard length of cloth in half, lengthwise, and sew the ends together, making a two-yard length. If two turbans are made it is only necessary to cut a two-yard length of material in two pieces. This is twisted loosely and sewed on the hat foundation.



A HERALD

Flowing head-piece: These vary in size. A thirty-inch square is a fair size. The square is swung over the head so that one side comes over the forehead about an inch above the nose. A fold is made at each side of the face, and is held in place with a narrow strip of twisted cloth tied about the head. The longer head scarfs are attached in the same way, and measure perhaps five feet square. If this square is cut at the sides, permitting the sleeves of the dress to come through, the whole costume will be more effective. The scarf can also be caught up in the back and fastened on one shoulder.

Sandals: To slipper soles (purchased in the five and ten cent store) sew brown tape, a piece at each side to tie over the toes, two to tie over the instep, and two at the center back. These are brought forward and tied over the ankle, or twisted about the leg securely and tied.



NATURE AND OTHER SYMBOLIC COSTUMES

Draperies: Many of the symbolic costumes used in pageants are flowing garments of some design. These costumes can most easily be made by using the draped biblical pattern.

Adapted aba: If a short-sleeved gown is required, use the aba pattern, but instead of using the full width of the material for each side, use only a width measuring from the center of the neck to the elbow when the arm is outstretched. Before these lengths are sewed together, tie a girdle securely under the arms. Stretch the arms out, and then mark where the seams should be sewed together. If a cape or outer drapery of some design is needed, follow the pattern suggested under biblical outer draperies. For example, suppose a costume is needed for a character called Wisdom. A garment of lavender is made, following the narrow aba pattern, and a cape of purple is added of the outer drapery design. If a costume is needed for a character called Spring, a length of pale green material draped as suggested under biblical draperies is all that is needed.



WISDOM

The square pattern: A square of material measuring in width from finger tip to finger tip when the arms are outstretched, with a slit for the head, makes another very soft lined drapery. This pattern is especially good for children. In appropriate colors this is the best foundation dress for such characters as Flowers, Raindrops, Sunbeams, Breeze, Leaves, etc. To illustrate how a few of these may be made distinctive, using the same basic pattern, the leaf square of green may



FLOWER HAT

The skull cap for this flower hat was made as suggested in the directions with one exception. Instead of gathering the cap together at the top and fastening inside, it was fastened outside, and a piece of green twisted about the left-over, forming a stem. The top gathering of the skull cap for the raindrop hat below was gathered inside the cap.

Crepe paper hats can be used many times if a little care is taken of them. If they are made according to direction in this pamphlet, they can be folded in half. Then in packing, place one cap on top of the other, watching to see that the petals are not folded over double. When using again, flare the petals and the cap will seem new.



RAINDROP HAT



FLOWER

be scalloped on the bottom edge like leaf-points; the raindrop square of gray may be slashed into ribbons at the bottom, and made even more effective by knotting the ribbons on the ends; snowflake squares of white can be cut into a jagged pattern on the lower edge and sprinkled with silver dust over spaces spread sparingly with white paste. A butterfly square can be folded in half and cut into wing design and dyed through the tie and dye method.

The tube pattern: This pattern can be used with children who play such parts as caterpillars, slow-moving insects, etc., and with slight changes can be used as the foundation for toy costumes such as tops,

drums, etc. Take two widths of cloth of the desired length, and sew together at the sides. If the costume is for a caterpillar, for example, the length will be from the neck to the ankles. The tube is shirred together at the neck and ankles. Add a double ruffle in each shirring. Cut short slits at the sides for the hands. Using the same pattern for a drum, the length is from the shoulder to the knee. Instead of shirring, a narrow hem is made, top and bottom, and a wire slipped through. The drum is held in place by fastening two pieces of tape on the lower edge, in front. Run them over the shoulders and fasten again on the lower edge in the back. By fastening on the lower edge, the tape becomes invisible to an audience.

Foundation Skull Cap: For nature characters, the skull cap is most easily made of crepe paper. Measure and cut a piece 20 inches by 12 inches. The grain must run with the width. On the lower edge, allowing an inch margin, paste a narrow strip of heavier paper for reinforcement. Flare the narrow margin edge by stretching the paper gently between the



CATERPILLAR



SUNBEAM HAT

This sunbeam hat is made of a double sheet of yellow crepe paper. Using the paper double makes the cap more durable, and also allows for twice the number of "rays" possible with only a single sheet of crepe paper. Another variation of the sunbeam cap can be made by pasting a circle of ray on the lower edge of the skull cap, eliminating the rays at the top. Each ray, so that it will stand out from the face, must be made of double paper, with a piece of wire glued through the center.



BREEZE

thumbs and forefingers. Paste together on the width. Gummed tape, paper or cloth will hold the cap together more securely than paste. Gather at the top, and tie so that the bunch of gathers comes inside of the cap.

Flowers: On a skull cap of green, paste one or more rows of flower petals. The petals should measure about five inches long. Paste the first row so that the tips of the petals extend about an inch beyond the flared edge of the cap; the second row an inch higher, etc. A circle of green,

cut with a jagged or irregular edge is pasted over the top, hiding the upper edges of the petals.

Insects: On a skull cap of black or dark brown, paste or sew two horns (antennæ), about 4 inches long, made of crepe paper twisted into a firm rope. A piece of wire wound with narrow strips of black and yellow paper and twisted into shape can also be used for antennæ.

Miscellaneous: Almost any style of head-piece can be made on the skull cap foundation. For example, raindrops—cut a strip of crepe paper, gray, 12 inches wide, into ribbons, against the grain, stretch, crush in the hand, and tie into the gathering at the top of the cap. Interesting snowflake caps can be made by tying balls of white crepe paper into the top gathering. Or, cut a large lacey star-flake of tissue paper, and paste securely on top of the skull cap.

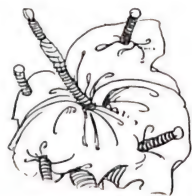
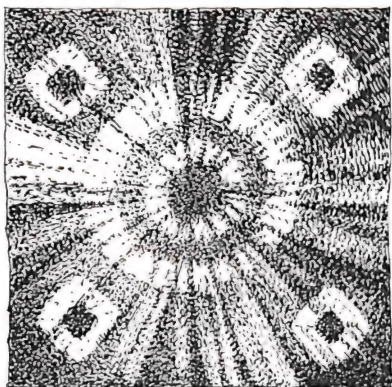
Design after design is possible, if a little careful thought is given to the subject and if the director will spend a little time on experimentation.



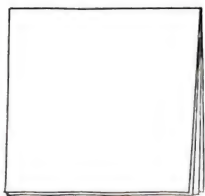
SNOWFLAKE



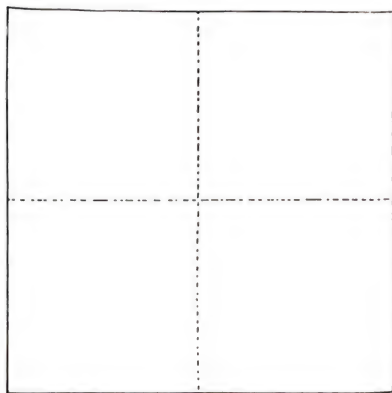
HOW TO MAKE COSTUMES



TIED AND READY
FOR DYEING



FOLDED READY
FOR TIEING



Fold material through center and across that—then hold center, a point, between thumb and finger, and wind near center with soft twine for say three (3) inches, then skip several inches, and then wind closely again for as wide a space as desired to keep the original colors—also tie each corner the same way—then dip in dye.



FOREIGN NATIONS

Many of these can be made through using combinations of the patterns listed. The Indian sari worn by the women, is a straight piece of cloth draped as described for the biblical costume. Study photographs, and plan for general effect rather than accuracy of detail. Costumes of foreign nations can be had at a very low rental price from the Board of Foreign Missions, Methodist Episcopal Church, 150 Fifth Avenue, and from the Department of Education, Baptist Board, 276 Fifth Avenue, New York City.

Dyeing

Beautiful or attractive colors are difficult to get in the inexpensive materials. Beauty in pageantry depends chiefly upon the grouping and combination of colors. The amateur can get best results through dyeing inexpensive materials. Cheese-cloth, used for the soft flowing garments, is a good substitute for silk. Unbleached muslin dyes well and substitutes for heavier materials. White canton flannel also takes dye and substitutes for velvets. Tintex, diamond dyes or any dye which dissolves quickly in water are easily handled. Use a separate receptacle for each dye; rubber gloves for the hands. Stretch sufficient rope in a convenient place for drying, with plenty of newspapers underneath to absorb the drip.

Simple dyeing: If tintex is used, each package of color is dissolved in a bowl of cold water, or warm water. The diamond dyes must be boiled, but it is not necessary to boil the material in the dye, as the cold dye takes very well and is easier to work with, particularly if shading or designs are to be added. After dipping the material, stretch carefully and dry. Hang the material over the line, and do not use clothespins. If the material is to be creped twist the entire length, tie at the ends, and then dry.



SUNBEAM



HOW TO MAKE COSTUMES



SIMPLIFIED
MEDIEVAL



SYMBOLIC
COSTUME



PILGRIM

Illustrations
courtesy
The Church School

A symbolic costume can be used for such characters as knowledge, hope, charity, etc.



RAINDROP

the other side. These stripes are of suitable width for biblical costumes, such as the aba.

Shading or mixing colors: Very often a beautifully shaded piece of hand-dyed material is the result of an accident. Nevertheless, it is well not to trust to accidents. Results depend upon the way the material is bunched together in the hand and dipped. For example, if a garment is to be shaded in yellow, lavender and green, the upper part is dipped in the yellow, wrung carefully, the middle part in lavender, and the bottom in green. The over-lapping colors will blend softly, as the dipping must be done at one time, permitting no color to dry before adding another.

Tie and dye: Most artistic effects can be had through this method of dyeing. Bunch a section of the material together in the hand. Twist and tie tightly about it a piece of heavy string. This is done as often as necessary to make the desired design. When this is dipped in the dye, the sections that

Stripes: Plait the material, on a flat surface, the width wanted for the stripes, one fold on top of the other. If the stripes are to be five inches wide, each plait must be five inches wide. Through the center, from selvage edge to selvage edge, gather these plaits together in the hand, dip the lower edge in one bowl of dye, wring dry, turn and dip the other edge in another dye so that the two colors meet. Stretch and dry. These stripes will run crosswise. To run the stripes lengthwise, fold the length of material in half so that selvage edge falls on selvage edge. Gather this, the length of the material, in the hand one third below the fold. Dip the section with the selvage edges in one dye, turn and dip



BUTTERFLY



are bound with cord will not take color. After the material has been dipped once, sections of it, such as borders, corners, etc., can be redipped, while yet wet, in another color or colors, and so form an interesting, and if carefully done, artistic piece of material. Fasten to drying lines with straight pins. See illustrations for tie and dye.

Colors

To say that each color has a special and unchangeable meaning would be the height of absurdity. Nevertheless, the use of color in nature, the symbolical association of color with church ceremonies throughout the centuries, and the employment of color by the older painters of religious subjects should be heeded.

Red is the most difficult color to use. Red is used as a signal of danger. Red is also the color of blood, and so we



CHILDREN'S DAY FAIRY

attach to that color the meaning of life. With this combination of interpretations in mind, the character War is usually clothed in red. The first leaves of spring are of a delicate green. So to pale green is attached the meaning of new life, fresh and unspoiled, as contrasting with the mature life quality of red. In Christian countries, black symbolises death. Yellow is regarded as a weak color. "He has a yellow streak in him."

It is also connected with disease, because of the yellowish pallor of the skin. Brown is associated with work. It is the "earth" color. Purple is the



royal color. Blue is depth—the sky; constancy, as in the steady roll of the ocean. And so we come to associate blue with truth. “True blue.” It is also the aristocrat among colors—“blue blood.” Dark blue, which almost borders on black is associated with gloom—“blue laws.”

Colors should be grouped for pleasing effects and not mixed promiscuously. Therefore the coloring of an entire pageant must be decided upon before beginning work on individual costumes. Harmony in colors should be studied. Books on the subject can be found in any library, but for those who find research work difficult, two simple harmonies in color are mentioned: analogous and complementary. Analogous harmony is the employment of colors in which one of the primary colors (red, yellow, blue) is toned in each, as red (the primary), orange, and violet. Complementary harmony employs contrasting colors, such as yellow (a primary) and violet, which is the combination of the other two primary colors. Colors of soft or grayed tones are more effective and less trying on the eyes than the brilliant or pure colors.



COLLEGE CAP AND GOWN

THINK! STUDY! EXPERIMENT! And then TRY AGAIN!
In no other way can worthy results be obtained.

BOOKS THAT HELP

Dramatization in the Church School
ELIZABETH ERWIN MILLER
University of Chicago Press

The Production of Religious Drama
COMMISSION OF CHURCH PAGEANTRY
AND DRAMA
281 Fourth Avenue, New York

Costumes and Scenery for Amateurs
CONSTANCE D'ARCY MACKAY
Henry Holt & Company, New York

Dennison's Costume Book
DENNISON MANUFACTURING CO.,
New York

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